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A STUDY OF THE RELIGION, THEOLOGY, AND CHURCHES OF THE UNITED STATES¹

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The following memorial, which I publish with the approval of the Prussian Minister of Worship and Education, is to inform the public at large of the establishment of an American Library of Theology at the University of Marburg. The scientific aims of this Library have the full approval not only of the Prussian government, but also of the theological Faculty of the University, of which I am a member. Thanks to a well-wisher, a German living in America, whose generosity made possible the founding of the Library, the Prussian government was in a position at the beginning of this year to call it actually into being, and to establish it at the University of Marburg as an official institution.

Established in connection with one of the seminars at the University, it has as yet, because of its modest resources, not been able to make any great claims, and must rely upon the active support of the Prussian government, and, above all, upon the help of friends and well-wishers in America. When, as head of the Library, I made public the document which brought unexpected fulfilment to a thought that occurred to me during my trip in America, it was not with the claim of wishing to make a scientific contribution to a religious understanding between Germany and America. It was much more my wish to give renewed expression to the deep convictions with which, under the fresh

¹ The translation has been made by Rev. W. H. Anthony (University of Pennsylvania '09) and Rev. J. M. Groton (Harvard '09), students at Marburg, winter semester 1912-13.

impression of the religion of a new land, I came to grasp the possibilities of a mutual theological understanding.

The conviction of the great value of an international religious understanding through the interchange of scientific ideas has not since left me; in fact, it deepens to its first glow as often as I discuss this subject or take pen to write of it. The work itself, however, will be done quietly, with no attempt to exaggerate either its significance or its possible results. Within half a year's time, I think, all vague enthusiasm following the establishment of the Library will have vanished, and the service to be rendered by it will be seen to be not only scientific but personal. For, no matter how religion may be viewed, it is always personal, and no scientific consideration can conceal this glowing personal element. It is for this reason that I regard the task of the American Library of Theology as that of rendering personal service as well as service in the realm of pure ideas.

Above all else, I consider of greatest value a collection of books from which may be gathered scientific information on the theological, ecclesiastical, and religious development and present-day conditions of North America. On account of the size of the field to be covered and the expense, only the most important works may be procured. Besides dogmatics, literature dealing with the psychology and the social aspects of religion is the most interesting which America just now has to offer us. These branches of the Library will be developed first, and brought into practical use by means of seminars, special courses, and lectures. Further, the Library offers free access to current scientific, religious, ecclesiastical, and political periodicals, which are important for a study of the continuous development of the religious life of America. In this way the Library will be of value to American students—to those who are willing to help us in our comparative studies of German and American forms of piety, and to those who, through American journals which elsewhere in Germany are not to be found, wish to keep in touch with the course of events at home. It may well grow into a common meeting-ground where German and American students of theology may learn to know one another. It should surely be the aim of both teacher and pupil to comprehend the international character of

religion in its widest sense, and to extend their examination to the religion of all civilized peoples, without in any way neglecting the sharply emphasized individual and national characteristics of the religious life. An impartial and intelligent introduction for foreign students to German religion would be a secondary aim, and could be realized in so far as we, as Germans, take pains to understand scientifically their own religious peculiarities and achievements. The publication of yearly reports, of papers in the Institute's special department, reviews, information on pertinent literature, these should go a long way toward completing our work, and above all should win for it in America the friends which it needs.

This small but fortunate beginning has its root in two lands. No land by itself can bring about a common understanding in matters of religion; the other must co-operate. The essence of all religion is its foundation in personality. The growth of this new institution may well symbolize the fact that only in the mutually unselfish undertaking of a common task and in mutual confidence is the progress of religious culture in the world to be sought. With firm confidence in the religious future of America the following memorial has its origin. It should lead the way for the work of coming years.

I should like to submit herewith the memorial, in which I made a report to the Prussian Ministry of Public Worship and Education in the fall of 1911 concerning my visit to America. In making this report I have in mind the suggestion to establish, in the department of the theological Faculty of one of the Prussian universities, a seminar for the study of religious conditions in the United States. I was so much impressed by the churches and their organizations in the East and Middle West that I feel I must not lose this opportunity to record my observations. As a result of my visit, I am more and more convinced of the importance of a thorough religious understanding between Germans and Americans. For these two peoples have doubtless a very important part to play in the future of Christianity and in the general development of culture. The task of bringing about this mutual understanding must, in my mind, devolve upon the university, and proceed along intellectual lines. It must nat-

urally have to do with the departments of (1) theology, (2) the churches, (3) the religious life. The work of such a seminar as I am suggesting will fall easily into these three main divisions.

Theology.—In the first place this seminar must have a library of distinctly theological works. The systematic theological branches should receive first consideration, since these express the most characteristic features of the religious development. I feel that a well-chosen collection of such books in English would be more valuable than the German translations of individual authors, which at best could give no more than a fragmentary survey. After all, how little do we really know of the theological literature of America! One looks for it in vain on the shelves of our university libraries. The leading theological periodicals ought also to be included. To supplement the use of this material, classes should be held with discussions, or now and then a lecture, on some such topic as the psychology of religion.

Church Organization.—In the second place and perhaps of greater importance, we should possess material relating to the history, teaching, organization, and present-day life of the different denominations, their leading periodicals, characteristic sermons, and books of instruction. There is much of such material available, as, for example, *The Congregationalist*, *The Churchman*, and many other periodicals, with the aid of which lectures on the creeds, history, *et cætera*, could be made of real and lively interest. Since those different denominations have a real and vital existence, their polity, forms of expression, and other externals acquire for us an ever-increasing interest and importance. A study of the organization and history of these denominations should prove of equal value with that of their theology and doctrine. The development of the church life and the fitness of the different forms of government must be of the greatest interest to our theologians, and even, may we not suppose, to students of law. For there is no doubt that we have suffered through our ignorance in this particular field. Therefore in some German university there should be easy access to abundant material for the study of such questions. This need our seminar could supply.

The Religious Life.—In the third place and finally, the general religious life in America must be studied. If we are to be

thorough, we must have the leading works of philosophy and ethics, politics and missions. Indeed, it is not difficult to see that a grasp of American philosophy and mental attitude is the only starting-point for bringing about such a mutual understanding as we propose. To this end I already held, in the winter semester of 1911-12, a seminar on the religion and philosophy of America, which I hope to continue. The scope of this seminar must be so wide as to include a study of the social and political periodicals, for example, *The Survey* and *The Outlook*. Of no less importance are books dealing with the social question, and the social work of the leading denominations, and reports of the Young Men's Christian Association. As the American government offers its *Statistics on Religious Bodies* (1906) to all interested, I have no doubt much of this material would gladly be placed at our disposal. Further, we must not overlook a study of politics, aesthetics, and *belles lettres*,—to mention only such writers as Whittier and Hawthorne. In short, it is here a question of so broadening the horizon that we may have a clear view of the development of the great underlying characteristics of American Protestantism, and at the same time come to understand the reason for the many religious divisions and their consequences.² Only in this way is a complete understanding of American Protestantism and a corresponding intercourse with it possible; the significance of which for the intellectual advancement of humanity and for the world's peace I assert in the strongest terms.

Indications point today to an international understanding of the sciences. For some time the interchange of the results of science and philosophy has been productive of much good. Political differences have been modified and a better understanding of the life of the nations brought about. Science, because of its objectivity and universality, forms a connecting link between nations; for the conclusions of logic are everywhere the same, and no one may disregard their scientific exactness. Hence may not science be a bond of peace between nations? The question must now be asked, should we content ourselves merely with this

²W. Müller's new book, *Das religiöse Leben in Amerika* (Jena, Diederichs, 1911), represents the beginning of such a collection in German. It could well have been more thorough and scientific.

interchange of abstractions? In every people we find a spiritual power which much more fully expresses its real being, namely, the power of religion. This, which reveals the very soul of a people, is individual, inimitable; nevertheless, it should play a unique part in international relationships.

The interchange of religious ideals is in itself a specific task. We realize that theology in many of its branches lacks that objectivity which is a common bond among the sciences. Religion, however, is not imparted by purely intellectual means. It is important to note that not only within the realm of the Christian religion generally, but even in a particular denomination whose members are made up of different nationalities, fundamental differences prevail in the forms and expressions of religion, which cannot occur in case of the sciences. The observations and impressions which I express here are based only upon the scanty material which I collected during my short stay in America in the spring and summer of 1911. As this has given me but a mere glimpse of the country, my effort will be limited to pointing out the necessity of religious intercourse between two peoples bound together not only by political and economic ties but, because of their pronounced Protestantism, by a common task in religion.

I must, in passing, strongly emphasize the fact that America has much to learn from Germany in theology and religion. But America has always followed with interest the course of German theology. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century her students have come to Germany, and in fact it is now quite the rule that the majority of those who receive foreign scholarships come to us to study theology at its source. We, however, have not been so ready to learn from them the condition of religion in their own country, but have contented ourselves with being willing hosts and disinterested teachers. The result has been that German influence is recognized more readily and with less prejudice in the universities and theological seminaries than anywhere else in America. Here the results of German theology exercise an undeniable influence.

But the time has come when we Germans must change our attitude. Friendships between peoples, as between individuals,

must be reciprocal, and such reciprocity must extend into the sphere of religion. The peculiar way in which America has developed and applied that which she has learnt from us makes it impossible for us to disregard her religious conditions. And we must be careful not to limit ourselves to the realm of pure theology, which is today so ably represented through the visits of German professors to America. For present-day relations call for greater depth and more soul; and these can only come from a thorough understanding of the whole religious life of America. Thus our attention is directed: 1. To American theology; 2. Church organizations; 3. religious ideals.

I.

After this general characterization it will not surprise us to find that Germany has little to learn from American theology. For we must remember that the theology of America is scarcely more than 150 years old, and it is only recently that it has shaken off the fetters of denominationalism. In fact, the fight for complete intellectual freedom is still going on. A few leading theological institutions, as, e.g., Union Theological Seminary of New York, the Harvard Divinity School of Cambridge, and some others, have acquired an interdenominational character and offer instruction to students of every creed. Only through this expansion has the complete freedom of professors of theology become an established fact; though they are of course benefited through friendly intercourse with affiliated universities. So broad has the teaching become that, in the more conservative denominations, some of their students have difficulty in gaining ordination. It is to be hoped, however, that these churches will, sooner or later, recognize the value of this radicalism, and through their own theologians and clergymen aid in this work of broader scholarship. A frequent combination of theory and practice in the seminaries—to point out the disadvantages of which is in itself a specific task and is here out of place—helps to develop this liberal movement.

My chief interest is in the theological seminaries, and of these only the more prominent are to be included in our study. We

must, however, mention the fact that the philosophical Faculties of different universities include men who have done excellent work in the field of religion. It should not be supposed for a moment, however, that all such professors are ultra-radical and dangerous to the Church. In fact, some of them occupy conservative positions and a few of the more radical ones have pastorates in orthodox denominations. That is indeed a good sign of tolerance.

Institutions and Scholars of Special Interest.—Among institutions which one would do well to visit I would mention the following: Union Theological Seminary in New York; The Harvard Divinity School, Andover Theological Seminary, and The Episcopal Theological School, in Cambridge, Mass.; The Yale Divinity School; The Divinity School of the University of Chicago; and others not affiliated with universities, such as Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut; Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine; and the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rochester, N.Y. I must also include the philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, and sociological departments of such universities as Columbia, in New York; Harvard, in Cambridge; Yale, in New Haven; University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, and others. Finally, I must mention, in psychology, the names of Stanley Hall of Clark University, Worcester, Mass.; J. Leuba of Bryn Mawr, Penn.; Edward S. Ames of Chicago; Irving King of Iowa; Geo. A. Coe of Union Theological Seminary in New York: in philosophy, J. B. Pratt of Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.; G. H. Howison of California: in sociology, Edward T. Devine and J. E. Russell of Columbia, New York, and others.

Now it is significant that the generally peaceful relationship between theology and church in America rests upon a more or less imperfect grasp of the former. I leave out of consideration the mass of traditional theology which, though unable to meet the demands of modern thought, is nevertheless very successful in practical work and still taught in many of the seminaries. Among its exponents one cannot fail to observe a lack of philosophical interest in religion,—a fact which is also true of many of the students. Even where German theology seems to wield a deep influence, the result is a superficiality and inability to comprehend

religion in its largest aspects. The scientific method, which is alone the result of time and careful study, is generally lacking in the treatment of American critical theology. With the disappearance, however, of Biblical authority and the introduction of radical criticism, the interest in scientific scholarship has grown. Along with this, history seems to have become frequently merely the object of negative criticism;³ and hence, the many singular attempts to grasp the modern situation apart from its historical setting. It is not to be wondered at that only a few of the leading minds of America have recognized the importance of revising the conceptions of historical tradition; for, as a matter of fact, America has very few great traditions, and those which it has have been almost entirely disregarded. On the contrary, one meets occasionally with thinkers who hold that only in the complete breaking away from tradition and in the dream of a new religion can true progress be realized. In studying this religious radicalism we must recognize that the lack of a scientific theology is partly compensated by a belief in the power of religion and by an enthusiasm for Christian progress.

Biblical Theology and Church History.—Here I must observe that this criticism is limited strictly to that department which we must regard as of paramount importance, viz., systematic theology. To this field I have principally directed my attention, together with the allied sciences of psychology, history of religion, and philosophy. Only in these departments am I able to form anything like a correct estimate of American theology. In the departments of the Old and New Testaments there are in English philological and historical works which Germany has always readily recognized and used. Work in Church history in America has, until recently, confined itself almost entirely to the English Church; though H. M. Baird's book on the Huguenots and H. C. Lea's on the Inquisition are noteworthy exceptions.

Dogmatics.—The study of general church history, however, in which Harnack and his works are the standard guides, has not

³ An extreme example of this is Thompson's article on the alleged persecution of the Christians at Lyons in 177 A.D., in *The American Journal of Theology* (July, 1912, pp. 358-384), and the withering criticism of the article by A. Harnack in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Nov. 3, 1913, p. 74 ff.

been without valuable results. If we leave out of consideration the field of practical theology, which is not at all scientific and which is always stamped with denominationalism, there remains systematic theology taken in its widest sense. And if from this we extract its essence, viz., its dogma, we find little profitable to the German theologian. Many of the principal American works on dogma have been derived from England and Germany. One can still detect, for example, Hegel's influence. Many of the latest works, influenced partly by Ritschlian theology and partly by modern empirical interests, have no clearly scientific character. Nevertheless, the works of leading theologians, such as William Adams Brown of Union Theological Seminary, and Edward C. Moore⁴ of The Harvard Divinity School, repay a careful study.

Ethics.—Much more original work has been done in the field of Christian ethics, which, combined with certain social ideas, plays an important part in religious education. Social ethics is studied in most of the seminaries. Especially to be mentioned in this connection is F. G. Peabody's seminar in Harvard, which is attended by a great many students. W. Rauschenbusch of Rochester, N.Y., represents a progressive type of this social Christianity. His book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, has found a wide circle of readers and has been translated into German. Although as a whole American social work is far behind that of Germany, yet the latter must come to deal with these social questions in the scientific and progressive way which is characteristic of the Americans, and in many practical details must be willing to learn from them. It is very interesting to notice how American theology concerns itself with these present-day problems, although means for their solution may not always be at hand.

Philosophy of Religion.—The philosophy of religion affords a less satisfactory outlook. In this field, as in one of pure science, American theology has not felt very much at home, and has, for

⁴See E. C. Moore's recent book, *An Outline of the History of Christian Thought since Kant*. Prof. D. C. Macintosh has given an account of this book in *The Yale Divinity Quarterly*, January, 1913, p. 103 f. I do not think that his opinion about the future of Kantianism is in any way correct. Prof. Macintosh does not know sufficiently the modern philosophical development in Germany, which is as a whole founded on Kant.

the most part, taken over Höffding's empiricism or Pfleiderer's Hegelianism. James's original attempt to construct a philosophy of religion cannot, in its purely empirical aspect, be supported. Indeed, James himself and his followers admit its inconsistency and logical defects. These men have made use of previous works which were by no means sufficiently developed for a treatment of the philosophy of religion, but which, however, were recognized as rich in influence for a future religious philosophy—the psychology of religion. Nevertheless, I would strongly urge a study of James's philosophy, although scientifically it is fragmentary and inconsistent. No one has expressed more genuinely and popularly the real character of American thought.⁵

Psychology of Religion.—Of greater importance for us are James's religious convictions, which he has formulated in his psychology of religion. We must unhesitatingly admit that America has created and paved the way for the development of a religious psychology, as of modern empirical psychology generally. On the other hand, it is true that the religious psychology of America is in a period of such undue popularity and overestimation that the book-market is flooded with a mass of hastily drawn conclusions and pseudo-scientific works. It also suffers from the fact that it has too early acquired publicity and become little more than a means of public entertainment. Nevertheless, it has value in so far as it is employed in religious pedagogy. Both orthodoxy and liberalism make use of the unestablished results of an empirical psychology to support their own dogmatic tenets. This religious psychology has failed to adjust itself to the history of religion and of dogma. Rather the history of religion has been little more than the laboratory of psychology. It is to be hoped that the above-mentioned sensationalism, since it has no value for religion, will soon spend itself, and the psychology of religion will find its proper place in the sphere of religion generally.

No matter how foreign this whole movement of the psychology of religion may seem to us, it is nevertheless a reproach to German theology that it has, in the face of these extravagances, held itself

⁵ See on James, Prof. Troeltsch's article in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Oct., 1912, "Empiricism and Platonism in the Philosophy of Religion," and articles by the present writer in *Die Christliche Welt*, 1910, No. 34, and 1913, No. 6.

too much in reserve. For it devolves, in the last analysis, on German theology to bring out, where others have failed, the results of this empirical science of religion. But German theology cannot accomplish this task until it has first collected and analyzed all previous results which others and especially America have furnished. Is not the time already ripe for such a collection, in order to sift materials, to criticise methods, and to effect, not only pastoral and practical ends, but a scientific embodiment of the psychology of religion in religious philosophy and dogma? In bringing this about, the work of such men as Troeltsch and Wobermin must find more general acceptance; especially as that type of religious psychology which is represented by Vorbrodt and Runze, and which is but a copy of the American, promises no success. At any rate, German theology must realize that the psychology of religion, even if it cannot claim the definite position which the inventive genius of the American has given to it, must form the basis of theological study. We have here, in any case, a definite opportunity to learn from American criticism.

Comparative Religion.—The department in which we are most of all indebted to American theology is that of comparative religion. The painstaking collection of sources and the study of primitive religion are among the most valuable contributions in the science of history. The work of such a scholar as G. F. Moore of Harvard is enough to prove that this invaluable material has received in America thorough and careful treatment. German theology should not lose sight of this American movement but profit by it, even where it seems to lose itself in philological discussion and secular history. For the task is ultimately that of making the spirit of religious history effective for present-day needs, or, in other words, to develop it into a philosophy of historical religion. In this respect it becomes most important for German theology, since it forms an introduction to the study of dogma.

This rough sketch shows that the study and appraisal of American theology would not be without its value, quite apart from the great advantage we should have through a better understanding of the scholarly world of America.

II.

If it is possible in some cases only to point to the necessity of a study of American religion, it is, on the other hand, easier and simpler to bring home to German study the need of a fuller knowledge of American church history. The development of the American denominations, each in its own special way and independent of the others, and largely under the influence of peculiar historical and political conditions, has given to them, in form and administration, the appearance of new organizations, and is therefore of great interest for our investigation. Unfortunately, our knowledge of American church conditions is so limited that we have come to have, in some measure, the grotesque conception in regard to them of ecclesiastical anarchy. Exactly the contrary is true. The ecclesiastical life of the great denominations expresses itself in a systematic way, in which the individual members play a personal part, so that one may almost speak of a genuine church democracy. One cannot fail to note, however, that these denominations more and more assume forms of organization in which the direction is placed in the hands of smaller bodies of men chosen by the congregation. Thus the church gradually loses sight of the democratic ideal, according to which every member has a voice in all questions. Simultaneously there has taken place an enrichment of the forms of worship which would have been intolerable to the earlier Puritan. A type of church life has therefore been developed which, for example, makes the Presbyterian form of government approximate the Congregational, and in which elements of the worship of the Episcopal Church creep into the liturgies of other Churches. This is not the place to discuss these matters in detail, but it is important to note that in the great denominations we have a process of development which aids the German student in understanding them and makes a knowledge of them important for German Protestantism.

Church Unity.—Another evidence of this form of development is the effort which is being made to bring about a union of the principal Churches, which will at least draw together their social

forces in united action. This effort towards unity includes mainly the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists, who through their joint decisions would direct the course of American Protestantism. Such a unity would mean not only a great conservation of energy, but also, notwithstanding the inherent differences of church organization, the possibility of acquiring very great influence, religious, moral, and educational. Rightly enough, American idealists see in the joint decisions of these denominations the genesis of an American Protestant *Volkskirche*, which, unhampered by any connection with the State, might play a very great part in the life of the people. Such a result can come only through Christianity and through Protestantism. The German Reformation has created this ideal; the American Church Union may be the first to realize it. It could not be a matter of indifference to German Protestantism if in America a church were formed which should represent the chief Protestant bodies of the world. Rather it would be our duty to have a share, in so far as we are able, in the realization of this unity, and to maintain a friendly relation with these denominations, which would make possible a universal bond of Protestantism. We dare not, in this day and age, live in ecclesiastical isolation, and we should only deceive ourselves if we concluded from present indications that either the church in general, or German Protestantism in particular, had finished its work. Who knows whether the German mind may not undergo a change, and, passing above individualism and intellectualism, fulfil the great obligation in regard to religion which it owes to our own people and to humanity! And so the church will be the means through which religious convictions find their practical expression. No religion without this social bond of the church is possible in modern life.

Church Life and Tolerance.—That the church in its social and religious activities can exercise an unlimited influence is proved in the case of America. It is incorrect to speak of the American Churches as having no influence. Equally true is it that German advocates of a separation between church and State are wrong when they point to America as a country where the church does not influence the government. The question of mere organization is absolutely irrelevant, when the spirit of the institution

begins to permeate the life of the people. One can hardly conceive that the representatives of the American people at Washington are there only as American citizens, and not also as Catholics and Protestants. Such a false idea would be dispelled through better knowledge. As well say that one Church can copy another.

German theology and the German Church, in considering the American denominations, are not to imitate them, but to learn what powerful religious and moral forces are at work in them, how these forces are nourished and made productive, what in our Church is essential and what accidental. Is it not astonishing that the Baptists, who used to consider all who practised infant baptism as pagans and would have no communion with them, today are uniting with all such "pagans"—Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and others? This means the renunciation of an earlier *conditio sine qua non*, a fundamental dogma of like importance with the verbal inspiration of the Bible. And this in a conservative Church, which in its orthodoxy is incomparably more fixed and well defined than any in Germany! The vision of practical Christianity is today in America so real that the fetters of dogma are being more and more loosened. Indeed, the thought of religious brotherhood is so potent in the Protestant Churches that men of different creeds gladly work together for the common cause of Christianity. The Evangelical Alliance already in the preceding century tried to bring about such an understanding between America, England, and Germany; but the dividing lines could not be done away with, and so the task remains. In Church and religion work unites, dogma divides. This fact Germany needs to learn from America.

German Lutheranism in America.—In this connection it must be mentioned that, unfortunately, the Lutherans in America have not been able to adapt themselves to this modern friendly feeling of the American denominations and to subordinate dogmatic differences. We must not overlook the fact, of course, that the Lutheran Church is made up of so many different kinds and classes of people that we cannot think of it as a unit. Connected with the Missouri Synod are the Synods of Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois, all of which form the Conference of

North America, and represent, especially Missouri, an inflexible creed. There is next the General Synod, which includes the Eastern States and contains many strictly American elements. Lastly we have the Evangelical Synod, which is the outgrowth of an effort for union. This Synod has a more liberal creed than the others, but is in fact conservative and dogmatically inflexible. Because of this a number of German Free Churches have separated from it and formed the German Evangelical Protestant Preachers' Union and Conference. As a result of their free thinking they find no support from the Germans, and because of their small numbers they are being gradually absorbed by the American denominations, especially the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Unitarian. It is no injustice to designate the German Lutherans as irreconcilably positive and dogmatic.

This exclusiveness in orthodox theology has produced many disadvantages for German Lutherans in America, and it is high time for the Lutheran Church to enter progressively the paths of thought and action. Also for the German mother Church the connection with the German Church in America will thus be made easier. Theological work in German universities ought to help in bringing about a better understanding of church life in America and the future of German religion there.

It is only through a full understanding of American church conditions that we shall be able to use our strong influence in keeping the German Church in America in the line of religious progress. The important part which the church is to play in the future of America makes it necessary for us to know and understand the American denominations.

Value of American Denominations.—Such a task necessitates first of all a study of the history, tenets, and organization of all the American religious bodies. It is self-evident that we ought not to pick out merely the leading ones; it is rather a question of studying the whole extent of American religious life. After this we should consider the denominations individually, their forms and historical modifications, their educational institutions, their schools and seminaries, their doctrinal development to the present day, their ideals of government and how they are realized. Only after such a comprehensive study can we legitimately draw

our conclusions. Much will undoubtedly appear to be superficial, and of little value, and at times bordering on the sensational and ludicrous. However, far-reaching indications of a deep religious spirit and an unusually practical method of organization become all the clearer in the leading denominations. While this organization is the guardian of American piety, which devotes itself to practical, effective, and progressive work, it is, on the other hand, little fitted to nourish the inner religious life. All the more conspicuous is the social significance which these Churches increasingly acquire, their sense of obligation to the people, and their practical work for the public welfare. A study of the creeds of the American denominations enables us to judge directly to what extent they inspire morally and influence religiously the life of the people, and realize, in a new way and with new powers, the imperishable ideals of Christianity.

III.

The next point of importance is a study, from the point of view of religion, of American life generally, with special reference to the way in which its Christian life has developed. While this development in America is still in its beginning, and is so broad and unorganized as to admit of no detailed study, a careful and thorough investigation might result in a truer estimate than the American himself would be likely to make. For doubtless the foreign observer views the religious and social development more as a unit than the Americans, with their many divisions, are capable of doing. The material of special significance for this study may be classified according to the following divisions: 1. Academic; 2. Commercial; 3. Industrial.

1. *The Academic*: It is very interesting to the German who pays a visit to any of the leading American endowed universities of the East, such as Princeton, Pennsylvania, Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Williams College, to see what an important part Protestantism plays in them all. Everywhere he finds chapel services, at which Professors of the different Faculties make brief religious addresses, and, in institutions where attendance is not compulsory, he finds students of all kinds gladly and voluntarily

attending these exercises. How uplifting is the influence of the morning devotions in Harvard, for example, which some of the leading preachers and men of America conduct for one or two weeks at a time, while having opportunity in free hours for personal discussion with the students on every vital question! How helpful also for the young university preacher, near to the students in age and experience, preaching to them on Sundays and coming into social touch with them during the week by means of open evenings, visits, conferences, and small groups for discussion of religious questions! The presence, for example, of such a man as Columbia University has, is of the utmost significance, and forms just that bond between Professors and students which in Germany we lack. The intellectual unripeness and lack of independence of the American student encourages, perhaps, such religious relationships. And it is surprising that these can exist in a university even in such a giant city as New York. The result of this is a tendency to draw the denominations together.

Y. M. C. A.—Significant also in the life of the student is the way in which he is directed in the practical realization of his religious ideals. I have especially in mind the Young Men's Christian Association, which exists in every university and college and breathes a spirit of personal religion. The methods of its work in the University of Pennsylvania, for example, are astonishingly effective, and exemplary. The *Y. M. C. A.* in the Middle West, where I attended a very interesting student conference, is intellectually much less developed than in the East, where it numbers among its members some of the finest and most capable young men, who may rank with the best German students. All this tends to create in every university a fellowship of a high moral character which is at the same time a source of great help to the morally weak. The moral life of the student is further developed through practical work, which makes him realize his obligations to others. Both university settlements and Churches seek the help of the students in their institutional work. Students of theology are in this way often too heavily burdened and diverted from their studies. This is not true, however, with students of other departments. Rather this practical religious work in which they are often engaged makes them realize as per-

haps nothing else could the work of religion and the seriousness of their studies. The work of Charles Stelzle in New York City, which attracts many students of Union Theological Seminary, is a notable illustration of this student-activity.

Interest in Foreign Missions.—Still another indication of the religious spirit among the students is their interest in Foreign Missions, a work in which one recognizes the enthusiasm of the students combined with the maturer conception of religion on the part of their leaders. The way in which every university provides for its own mission-work and the willingness with which students contribute their own money, are most commendable. Some of the best-trained theological graduates gladly volunteer as missionaries. This interest in missions gives also a world-wide aspect to Christianity. Missionary work is being more and more carried on not only by the theological student but also by the engineer, teacher, chemist, and doctor, who through their Christian environment in the university have received, along with their scientific training, a simple enthusiasm and inspiration for the cause of Christianity throughout the world. This comes from a strong, unreflecting conviction rather than from a clear knowledge of the situation. With this enthusiasm is bound up a dream of world-conquest, which is perhaps only natural in a people so young and prosperous.

It seems to me that the United States can bring its influence to bear upon Japan and China through its missionary work much more quickly than through any political measures. Such a conception of world-conquest implies a genuinely modern belief in the universal mission of Christianity. The accomplishment of this task will help considerably the position and greatness of that people which has unselfishly recognized and undertaken it. The fact that the American people with its ingenuousness and intellectual vagueness is far-seeing enough to realize the great political significance of Christianity and to undertake without delay, although at first with ineffectual methods, the tasks involved, stamps them, it seems to me, more than do any commercial and technical accomplishments, as a people and nation with a future. This far-sighted national policy, the extension of Christianity, finds its origin in the university; and is not, as in our case, the

result of a traditional and child-like piety. How absolutely different from this modern world-wide conception is our whole traditional view of Christianity as a means of maintaining for the State and people, through the dissemination of National and Christian culture, prestige in the world! It is for the German universities to realize the importance of this matter.

It must be observed, however, that the idealism and unselfishness which are characteristic of all German missionary work, are in America, consciously and unconsciously, attended with national motives. Practical considerations urge the American to great accomplishment. But these considerations are able to demand from him as much personal self-sacrifice and devotion as foreign missionary work usually requires. It is a striking fact that America, in her missionary work, has singled out principally those countries which are important to her own political interests, and through their culture to the future of civilization, viz., Japan, China, and India. But it is only natural that missionary work should follow in the course of new international relationships with the Far East. And perhaps it is not irrelevant to ask if, with our present-day lack of idealism, such practical motives would not actuate our own people in mission-work to a deeper conception of religion and Christianity.

The Theory of Pragmatism in Religion.—It is interesting to note, in connection with this practical side of American religious life and its desire for conquest, how it has been influenced by the philosophy of pragmatism. This philosophy, with a true understanding of the American spirit, has drawn religion into the field of its speculations and has developed its metaphysics into a philosophy of religion. It is, in its theoretical contradictions and impossibilities and in its practical utility and popularity, a typical product of Americanism. More an attitude toward life than a philosophy, it has won for itself recognition in educational circles; it is supreme at such universities as Columbia and Chicago; it exercises the strongest influence upon morality and religion, since it directs popular idealism into thoroughly utilitarian channels. Through this philosophy, which has woven itself into American religion and has won for itself a place of prominence, American logic, ethics, and aesthetics are being more

and more subjected to religious pragmatic influences. In the field of logic it means an interpretation of truth in terms of faith; in the field of ethics it is shown in the practical application of all possible means for the attainment of religious ideals; in the field of aesthetics it has, up to the present, been of uncertain value, but will doubtless make its influence felt here as well; as evidenced by the drama of Miss Josephine Preston Peabody (Mrs. Marks), *The Piper*, and the popular religious shows. So in pragmatism we find the philosophical explanation of the practical spirit of America which has directed it to a higher Christian development. The philosophy of James and his school can, however, be regarded from our scientific standpoint only as the hybrid product of a period of transition. But it is the key to the understanding of the religious life of the universities, and its study is therefore necessary for all those who would understand fully the practical expressions of American religion.

2. *The Commercial*: In the business-world of America, which is ruled by commercial interests, religious influence is not so strong as in some of the more advanced academic circles. It is always to be borne in mind that the influence of the universities, especially as they assume a utilitarian character, which is in accordance with the practical bent of the American mind, becomes constantly stronger and of greater significance in industrial and commercial life. This is especially true of the State Universities of the West. Further, the influence, which countless graduates of universities now in business carry from their college days into practical life, is constantly becoming greater. As a result, settlements, Y. M. C. A.s, missions (alluded to under 1), are actively supported by business-men, who realize the practical work of religion. The interest of business-men in the Y. M. C. A., for example, is accompanied by the pragmatic principle that their employees, well cared for and religiously influenced, can be of greater service to business. It may often happen (unfortunately) that a leading merchant prefers to contribute largely to the Y. M. C. A. rather than to increase the wages of his employees. Railroads and States are concerned with the moral education of youth; the Y. M. C. A. makes special provision for railroad-employees and for the men in the navy. Ex-President Taft has

stated that only the religious influence of the Y. M. C. A. could improve the demoralized conditions in the navy; and this it actually does.

Men and Religion Forward Movement.—This religious interest among the laity has crystallized in a striking manner in the "Men and Religion Forward Movement," which, in regularly planned campaigns in the great cities of the United States, aroused religious interest among the men. If this work of the laity is more a piece of external organization than a religious deepening, it is nevertheless important to observe how strongly these laymen feel their obligations to their fellows and seek to fulfil these obligations. And since the Churches have taken a deep interest in the movement, the result may be, in spite of sensational and advertising methods, a great improvement in American religious and moral conditions.

Social Christianity.—With all this it is not to be forgotten that social work in America, for which the State does not hold itself responsible, falls in a very great degree to the individual citizen, and that the further prosecution of this has to be left to the conscience of the ruling classes. The pulpit exercises an obvious influence on business-men in bringing them to a realization of their moral obligations. In the last analysis social work is ever the result of the religious impulse. This is shown in the fight against intemperance, in which religion has been the great champion of prohibition; in the problem of child-labor, to which is opposed every fine instinct of the people; and in the case of the work and wages of women. When once the deadened conscience of the people is awakened, it is remarkable how quickly moral unscrupulousness gives way before it, how a new public opinion is created which is hostile to monopolies that trample on the rights or disregard the interests of others, and how promptly this sentiment makes itself effective by legislation and judicial decision, as in the case of the notorious Standard Oil Company. Further, new norms of business principles are established which, in their purely secular character, evince nothing of the religious motive which gave them being. How great is the influence, politically and ethically, which preachers such as Lyman Abbott and Parkhurst, in New York, have exercised, and a publication like *The Outlook*!

In the same way the religious social conscience extends, slowly but surely, to other fields. Since so much of the social work is left to the individual which is, in Germany, the work of the State, it is no wonder that America is still very far behind in the attainment of social and religious ideals. Both in academic and business-circles the "Social Gospel" is the watch-word, and the social worth of Christian teaching, the ethics of the Gospels, is so strongly emphasized that the importance of the inner life of the Christian is almost lost sight of. The program of preachers in New York, Chicago, and other large cities is Christianity in its social aspects; Christianity in the great cities is to become awakened through its social conscience. Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* is not without good reason one of the most widely read books, and its sequel, *The Christianizing of the Social Order*, expresses in the title the practical direction which Christianity in America takes. In this same way we must explain the general disposition of the people, which in the United States has given rise to the peace movement. In the enthusiasm for world-peace, which must be regarded not so much from a political as from a purely religious point of view, there vibrate both religious and social chords. In general it might be said that it is not the social work, but the religious impulses prompting it which are of importance for us. For a task is involved here which with us has been neglected, viz., that of bringing religion into the life of the people.

3. *The Industrial:* Here we find certain conditions similar to those already mentioned in connection with the academic and commercial groups. These are settlements, wages, child-labor and woman-labor. In addition to these there are certain problems which are too often passed over—housing, the supply of food and water, and the religious education of children. The attempt to solve these problems may be designated as an effort to Christianize the whole life of America. Apart from the social work carried on by the individual denominations, in which, owing to the many divisions, much energy is wasted, and apart from the excellent work of the Y. M. C. A., the religious sense of obligation to the working classes has raised two problems: the immigrant-problem, and that of the people's amusements.

Religion and Immigration.—The immigrant-problem is becoming more and more the most difficult question for the American government. The great influx of Poles, Greeks, and Irish means a growth of Catholicism which is incompatible with the Puritan spirit. More serious is the accompanying influx of peoples either without religion or hostile to it, who recruit the ranks of the social democrats. The religious conscience is now so far awakened that obligation to the immigrant is not regarded as being discharged merely with the inculcation of the democratic spirit. In addition, the necessity is realized of instilling, by means of religion, a deeper sense of duty towards the community. The gross individualism which prevailed among the earlier immigrants must be socially and religiously modified and made to share in the general communal life. This care of the immigrant is rightly emphasized by the religious bodies. It is interesting to note how here also the Americans, who believe in religious equality, cannot dispense with religion for the attainment of its national aims. And may not religion itself, as it renders this service, in turn be greatly enriched?

Religion and People's Amusements.—The next problem is the supervision of the people's amusements. American individualism has produced in the past conditions of inconceivable coarseness. One has only to think of the Fourth of July, when every year hundreds are killed by fire-works. It is commendable, however, that in the last two years this celebration has been reformed, and milder forms of entertainment, such as parades, park-amusements, etc., substituted. Secular and religious institutions have worked together in this cause. As characteristic is the movement to provide a "People's Sunday Evening." Since the saloon is closed, other places of entertainment must be provided, and reading-rooms and church services do not suffice. Religious societies therefore endeavor to supply this need by lectures and instruction, and by an effort to arouse among the masses a real interest for religion, which with many has been quite lost. Such is the aim of Charles Stelzle in his Labor Temple in New York. His position as leader of the social work of the Presbyterian Church is illuminative. In all such work the American laborer is a congenial person to deal with, as he is not biassed by any

false philosophy of life. Nor is he a stranger to the ideals of religion. How otherwise would it have been possible for a social leader such as the Secretary of the Labor Union in America, Mr. R. Robins, during the strike among the miners of Pennsylvania in the summer of 1911, to gather the strikers together for a Sunday morning service, after having counselled and advised them the preceding evening in their fight against the company! Thus does religion assist the laborer in his social battles. It is also for him a real help in his daily needs. The Churches take advantage of these opportunities to guard jealously this religious disposition. Hence the zeal with which Christian communities take part in this work, and, being carried on in the name of social Christianity, it means a most telling extension of the Christian spirit throughout the nation.

If with such a large country and so young a people very little aid is at hand for the dissemination of Christian culture, yet it seems to me that great ideals are at work, which we perhaps can recognize better than the Americans themselves. If to the profit which we have gained from a study of the religious development of America and its meaning for us both ecclesiastically and religiously, we could add the possibility of helping in an intellectual way this kindred people, it would be but one further reason why we should investigate the religion, the theology, and the Church, of America.

In concluding, I should like to express the hope that a systematic study of the above-mentioned facts might be not without profit for our students of theology, for other students of our universities who take an interest in such questions, and finally to American Protestantism, which will gladly encourage such scrutiny. It must be left to the future whether, as a result of this scientific study of the development of a modern people, the practical spirit may not influence our own religious life—a spirit which we should make our own, and which would not bear the foreign stamp which we, in our intercourse with England and America, too often recognize in our people. On the other hand, only those results, which through the German scientific method can be thoroughly Germanized, are capable of being incorporated into German religious life and used as a means of teaching and helping the German

people. And if through a gradual filtration foreign religious elements are to be brought into our own life, where else than in our universities can this thorough work of adjustment be accomplished? These practical aims, however, must receive a secondary consideration. This does not prevent us from considering their realization. But the principal task is to make Protestant theology and the Church more intimately acquainted with American Protestantism, and in this way to insure the friendliest feeling between these two kindred peoples.